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SUBJECT: EASTERN DRC NOTES - FEBRUARY 3

REFS: A) Kinshasa 98 B) Kinshasa 92 C) Kinshasa 85

¶1. (U) The items contained in this report consist principally of spot information from various sources. This report is not exhaustive, nor can all the information contained therein be confirmed at this time.

Human Rights Watch on Bosco

¶2. (SBU) In a February 1 open letter to President Kabila (emailed to AF/C and DRL), Human Rights Watch (HRW) called on the GDRC to extradite CNDP renegade Bosco Ntaganda to the ICC. HRW criticized the GDRC for its recent open collaboration with Bosco, including his appointment as the deputy commander of the DRC-Rwandan joint operations. HRW maintained that peace and justice "should be seen as complementary, not contradictory," as President Kabila had implied in a January 31 press conference (ref A). HRW noted that, in May 2007, the DRC reportedly asked MONUC for assistance in arresting Bosco.

DRC-Rwandan Joint Operations

¶3. (SBU) Despite its frustrations with the Joint Operations Center (JOC), MONUC reported that the JOC was useful to corroborate field information with the FARDC. For example, MONUC and the FARDC concur that approximately 800-1,000 FDLR troops are present at Kashabere, northwest of Masisi; 1,200-1,500 FDLR soldiers are at Katoyi, south of Masisi; two FDLR battalions totaling 700-800 are deployed at Bushalinga, west of Kanyabayonga; and another FDLR battalion is southwest of Ishasha. MONUC sources reported a possible firefight in the Virunga Park, west of Rugari. After several days of remaining stationary, RDF forces are on the move again, with one group bypassing Masisi heading towards Walikale.

¶4. (SBU) Despite earlier doubts about CNDP willingness to integrate into the FARDC (refs B and C), MONUC reported significant numbers of CNDP troops reporting for integration: approximately 600 CNDP at Rutshuru; and 366 CNDP and 111 Pareco at Rumangabo. CNDP officers reportedly refused to present child soldiers for demobilization, allegedly threatening to withdraw from the integration program if MONUC insisted on including the child soldiers in the process.

¶5. (SBU) MONUC has been unable to verify media reports that the FDLR killed 36 civilians in villages between Masisi and Walikale. The FDLR announced that it "has never committed a single abuse against civilians in the DRC." An FDLR website reportedly claimed that the majority of the RDF soldiers participating in the joint operations are FDLR members who defected through the DDRRR process. There were also unconfirmed allegations of an FDLR reprisal attack against civilians at Minova in South Kivu, as well as allegations of

an RDF attack on villagers between Rutshuru and Ishasa.

¶16. (SBU) According to UNHCR, approximately 5,000 people fled Makobola, south of Uvira in South Kivu, after Mai Mai militia blocked a road. Fearing possible fighting, an estimated 1,300 Congolese crossed into Uganda January 26-30, bringing the total refugee flow to Uganda to 4,500 in January. UNHCR reported that approximately 40,000 Congolese have fled to Uganda since the latest round of fighting erupted in August 2008.

DDRRR Process Continues

¶17. (SBU) MONUC reported that increasing numbers of FDLR troops have surrendered. Fifty combatants surrendered to MONUC at Nyabiondo, northwest of Masisi, and smaller groups have reportedly trickled in at other North Kivu locations. DDRRR Head of Office Bruno Donat told the International Facilitation (IF) team that his office did not have enough trucks to handle the flow. Donat noted that, if current trends continue, the numbers could be in the "thousands" this month. (Note: Prior to the operations, DDRRR repatriations averaged about 150 per month. End Note.) The DDRRR office has printed flyers in various languages, indicating where the nine repatriation centers in North Kivu are and informing FDLR troops and dependents that they can repatriate without fear. According to Donat, Rwandan CHOD James Kabarebe fully supports the DDRRR program, but DRC National Security Advisor Prince Lafunda Kaumba, who handles DDRRR issues, is reportedly less enthusiastic.

¶18. (SBU) Most of the people arriving at DDRRR sites are dependents,

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although Donat opined that some may indeed be ex-combatants in civilian clothes. Technically, UNHCR has responsibility for civilians, so Donat has contacted ICRC and UNHCR for assistance. However, Donat told the IF team that he does not want to screen the ex-combatants "too closely." Donat appealed to the international community for resources, particularly transport, arguing that the time was propitious to "kick DDRRR efforts into full gear."

¶19. (SBU) Donat said he accompanied six RUD ex-combatants back to Kisiki following a one-week visit to Rwanda. In Donat's view, the group appeared reassured and open to the idea of repatriating. However, another source told Goma PolOff that the Rwandans had tightly controlled the visit, raising doubts as to whether the ex-combatants would actually agree to repatriate.

¶10. (SBU) In a January 17 statement, North Kivu tribal leaders (Mwamis) called for a sensitization campaign, with Mwami involvement, to encourage the peaceful repatriation of Rwandan combatants and their dependents.

Comment

¶11. (SBU) Donat undoubtedly has a motive to tout DDRRR successes, but the program is unarguably a key component for long-term peace in the East. Repatriation efforts appear to be working hand-in-hand with the threat of military operations. With President Kabila proclaiming that Rwandan forces must leave the DRC by the end of February, there may be a limited window of opportunity to use the carrot-and-stick approach to promote DDRRR.

GARVELINK